

# RAMMELLZEE: It's Not Who But What (Documentary)

[youtube id="PjAfVHSeIvY"]  
New York graffiti artist, philosopher and hip-hop pioneer Rammellzee is explored in a new documentary from director Oscar Boyson. Red Bull Arts New York debuted the film today at the end of their month-long music festival. Rammellzee created Gothic Futurism which was his beliefs about the evolution of language. His "Beat Bop" single influenced vocal styles in hip-hop and had original artwork from his friend Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Rammellzee's loved colors and was known for his painting and the masks and costumes he wore during a performance. Jim Jarmusch gave him a spot in *Stranger Than Paradise* giving him his only film appearance. Rammellzee: It's Not Who But What was featured as part of Red Bull's Racing For Thunder exhibition featuring his work. The festival opened with a musical tribute to Rammellzee called If This Knowledge Scares You, The Equation Is Working. The nine-minute documentary interviews people who knew and worked with Rammellzee and they share their memories of him.

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## We Said Goodbye In 2010



The producer, musician, and arranger is famous for helping Al Green find his sound on the Hi Records sessions and shaping Memphis soul. He also worked as a trumpet player and bandleader with minor R&B hits like ["Soul Serenade"](#) before Hi Records.

## **1. Willie Mitchell**

[youtube]tQh-\_llN\_UY[/youtube]

Drummer and baritone for Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. Pendergrass was dominant in dance music and R&B with the group and as a solo singer. He defined a masculinity in the R&B of the late '70's and '80' that had bravado and sensitivity. Pioneer of the "ladies only" concert.

## **2. Teddy Pendergrass**

[youtube]RACIhmZu1A[/youtube]

Founding member and tenor-falsetto of The Dramatics. His falsetto was a trademark of the group that still performs. Snoop Dogg gave them wider recognition with another generation after collaboration and appearance in the video for "It's A Doggy Dogg World."

## **3. Ron Banks**

[youtube]-DeTR8n7eTU&[/youtube]

Manager of the Sex Pistols and Bow Wow Wow. McLaren helped bring hip-hop to the UK with his Duck Rock album that had a guest appearance from The World Supreme Team DJs who hosted an influential urban music show on 105.9.

## **4. Malcolm McLaren**

[youtube]HFQQeUNaZtc[/youtube]

Gifted Unlimited Rhymes Universal was one-half of the authoritative hip-hop group Gang Starr with DJ Premier. They were underground royalty who never turned their backs on the hip-hop aesthetic for commercial gain. Guru would start the critically acclaimed Jazzmatazz series of albums in '93 that put his rapping alongside various R&B and jazz artists.

## **5. Guru**

[youtube]QCG3kJtQBKo[/youtube]

Lena Horne was a nightclub performer, singer, actress and dancer. She became the first Black entertainer to sign a long-term contract with a major Hollywood studio with MGM in 1943. She was activist that was once blacklisted for views that included a refusal to perform for segregated troops. She sold more records than any other female artist on the RCA-Victor label at the time. Her one woman show earned her a Tony and two Grammys in 1981.

## **6. Lena Horne**

[youtube]Qw9oX-kZ\_9k&[/youtube]

Coleman became an icon of the '80's when co-starred on the TV show *Diff'rent Strokes*.

## **7. Gary Coleman**

[youtube]PPUsQDm-HQY&[/youtube]

Ali Ollie Woodson is best remembered for providing lead vocals for The Temptations on their '80's hits "Treat Her Like A Lady" and "Lady Soul." He started his career at age 19 with the Original Drifters.

## **8. Ali Ollie Woodson**

[youtube]PRkw9UnVhug[/youtube]

Marvin Isley was the youngest member of the Isley Brothers and provided bass guitar for some of their biggest songs like "Fight The Power Part 1."

He would later form a trio with brother-in-law Chris Jasper and Ernie Isley to release "Caravan Of Love."

## **9. Marvin Isley**

[youtube]BxnbVGFK1W0[/youtube]

Garry “Diaper Man” Shider was the musical director of the Parliament-Funkadelic clan for most of their life. It is him that provides the lead vocals for “Cosmic Slop” and “One Nation Under A Groove.”

## **10. Garry Shider**

[youtube]9I56Kkxh\_os[/youtube]

The founder of Gothic Futurism and an early graffiti writer, Rammellzee was also a rap artist who performed in self-made masks. “Beat-Bop” was rapped in the Gangsta Duck style and produced by Jean Michel Basquiat.

## **11. Rammellzee**

[youtube]dWxAZPr1eLM[/youtube]

Mr. Fuqua founded the doo-wop group The Moonglows and gave Marvin Gaye his big break by putting him in the group and later introducing him to Berry Gordy. He later worked with the disco star Sylvester producing his hits “Dance (Disco Heat)” and “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real.)”

## **12. Harvey Fuqua**

[youtube]dDGpeW4sUUs[/youtube]

Catfish Collins’ rhythm guitar started out in a group called The Pacemakers with his brother Bootsy Collins. They would become James Brown’s backing band The JB’s. After leaving Brown he recorded on some of the most important Funkadelic dates.

## **13. Phelps “Catfish” Collins**

[youtube]4AGQQhFSy5g[/youtube]

Lincoln co-starred in “Nothing But A Man” and received a Golden Globe nomination for her role in “For Love Of Ivy.” She was once married to Max Roach with whom she recorded the

vitriolic We Insist! -Freedom Now Suite. Her vocals have influenced succeeding generations including Cassandra Wilson who admits to learning artistic honesty from her.

#### **14. Abbey Lincoln**

[youtube]QmWfTDZvvkM[/youtube]

Robert Wilson is Charlie Wilson's brother and the bass player of The Gap Band. The band of brothers including Ronnie were one of the major funk bands of the '70's and '80's.

#### **15. Robert Wilson (bass guitar, The Gap Band)**



Griffey's SOLAR Records was responsible for some of the biggest acts of the '80s including Shalamar, The Whispers, Lakeside, Klymaxx, Dynasty and Midnight Star. He was also a big promoter who booked shows for Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, James Brown and Aretha Franklin. He was also a talent coordinator on Soul Train and co-founded Soul Train Records with Don Cornelius. Death Row Records got a push from his expertise because he was Suge Knight's mentor and some of Dr. Dre's The Chronic was recorded in his studio.

#### **16. Dick Griffey**

[youtube]JtUEoByJq5M[/youtube]

Aaron-Carl's dance tracks became staples of the international house music scene. He founded Wall Shaker Records in his Detroit hometown and released several singles in a variety of styles.

#### **17. Aaron-Carl**

[youtube]mEu8Dr09PbY[/youtube]

Burke is a rock and roll legend best known for his hit song "Everybody Needs Somebody To Love." He never had the fame of his peers like Wilson Pickett but his years on the Atlantic

imprint produced some of the best soul of the '60's.

## **18. Solomon Burke**

[youtube]9-ccrrjBJ3A[/youtube]

Walker founded gospel titans The Caravans and was a protege of Mahalia Jackson. She was instrumental in the careers of Inez Andrews, James Cleveland and Shirley Caesar. She founded the Gospel Music Workshop Of America with Cleveland in 1967.

## **19. Albertina Walker**

[youtube]K6oYyG0KcvQ[/youtube]

Jamaican reggae singer Gregory Isaacs was called the “cool ruler” because he chose to sing love songs instead of lyrics about social injustice like Bob Marley. His style took more from American R&B than roots reggae. “Night Nurse” was his breakthrough single that put his name in clubs around the world.

## **20. Gregory Isaacs**

[youtube]Z\_Vj\_CJJjvI[/youtube]

“Moody’s Mood For Love” became a standard covered by Aretha Franklin and George Benson among others. He started his career with Dizzy Gillespie and was a rare jazzman who showed humor.

## **21. James Moody**

[youtube]-tLCWZWR6Fk[/youtube]

The most soulful white singer ever Marie’s career was jumpstarted with help from Rick James when they were both on Motown Records. Marie stayed true to her R&B roots for her entire career. Her early experimentation with rap on “Square Biz” made Debbie Harry’s “Rapture” rap look mild and weak. Her lawsuit against Motown resulted in The Brockert Initiative that makes it illegal for a label to keep an artist without paying

them or releasing material.

## 22. Teena Marie



Bernard Wilson was a baritone singer in Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes. The group was an anchor of the Philly soul sound.

## 23. Bernard Wilson

[youtube]brBtTluod\_w[/youtube]

Jazz educator and pianist who started out with the Ben Webster Quartet. He was highly regarded among jazz heavyweights like Charlie Parker. As a performer he was known for “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free.”

## 24. Dr. Billy Taylor

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# R.I.P. Rammellzee

Pioneering graffiti artist and rapper Rammellzee passed yesterday in his native Far Rockaway, New York. He was one of the early writers to tag the NYC subway trains and he he built a philosophy called Gothic Futurism that was designed to free letters from their Western colonization. He made iconic appearances in *Style Wars* and *Wild Style* and he was friend to Jean- Michel Basquiat who created the cover of “Beat Bop.” Way before MF Doom Rammellzee was the guy in hip-hop who stayed in costume and lived his theories.